

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8659
INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 4285

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, IS, SA
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH EZER WEIZMAN: THE SAUDI ROLE

REF: TEL AVIV 4404

1. WE WERE STRUCK BY WEIZMAN'S COMMENTS TO AMB LEWIS REPORTED IN THE LAST PARAGRAPH OF REFTEL TO THE EFFECT THAT SYRIA AND EGYPT CAN NEGOTIATE PARTIAL SETTLEMENTS: "THEY CAN DO IT, AND KEEP THE PLO UNDER CONTROL, IF THE SAUDIS INSIST. THE SAUDIS ARE THE KEY." WE ARE NOT SURE EXACTLY WHAT WEIZMAN HAS IN MIND, BUT IT APPEARS TO REFLECT AN IMPORTANT MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE SAUDI POSITION AND ROLE.

2. THE SAUDIS HAVE NEVER BEEN INTERESTED IN PARTIAL SOLUTIONS FOR THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE. THEY HAVE CONSISTENTLY URGED A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. AFTER THE 1973 WAR KING FAISAL, WITH MANY MISGIVINGS, INDICATED THAT SAUDI ARABIA WOULD NOT
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OBJECT TO THE STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH TO A FINAL SETTLEMENT SO LONG AS THERE WAS CONTINUING PROGRESS AND THE PROCESS WAS ACCEPTABLE TO THE CONFRONTATION STATES. THIS VERY LIKE WARM ENDORSEMENT OF PARTIAL AGREEMENTS (WHICH THE SAUDIS LIKED TO THINK OF AS GETTING THE COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT BY STAGES)

ENDED WITH SINAI II WHICH THE SAUDIS CAME TO REGARD AS LITTLE

LESS THAN DISASTROUS. THE TERMS OF THAT AGREEMENT WHEN THEY FINALLY EMRGED WERE BAD ENOUGH BUT WHAT WAS PARTICULARLY PAINFUL FOR THE SAUDIS WAS THE RIFT IT CAUSED BETWEEN EGYPT AND SYRIA WHICH WAS BARELY PATCHED UP AT THE RIYADH SUMMIT AFTER A YEAR OF UNPRECEDENTEDLY INTENSIVE SAUDI DIPLOMATIC EFFORT.

3. IN SHORT, THE SAUDIS FEEL THEIR ORIGINAL JUDGEMENT THAT PARTIAL AGREEMENTS ARE NO GOOD HAS BEEN VINDICATED. IF BOTH SYRIA AND EGYPT WANT AGAIN TO BEGIN NEGOTIATING PARTIAL AGREEMENTS, THE SAUDIS MIGHT NOT ACTIVELY OBJECT. WE CAN CONCEIVE OF NO SITUATION, HOWEVER, IN WHICH THE SAG COULD BE INDUCED TO USE ITS LEVERAGE ON AYRIA AND EGYPT TO BRING THEM AGAINST THEIR WILL TO NEGOTIATE PARTIAL AGREEMENTS.

4. WEIZMAN MAY ALSO BE OVERESTIMATING THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SAG CAN INFLUENCE EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN ACTIONS, BUT THAT IS ANOTHER MATTER.

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